

# *Unified School District of Antigo*

**Donald B. Childs, Ph.D.**  
Interim District Administrator

**Karen K. Baker**  
Director of Pupil Services

**Cindy Fischer**  
Director of Instruction

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**  
120 S DORR STREET, ANTIGO, WI 54409-1220  
PHONE: 715-627-4355 FAX: 715-623-3279

**Mary Jo Filbrandt**  
Director of Business Services

**Tina Ver Hagen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Tim Prunty**  
Supervisor of Building & Grounds

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March 9, 2015

**Honorary Representative Mary Czaja**  
**Room 321 East**  
**State Capitol Building**  
**PO Box 8952**  
**Madison WI 53708**

Dear Representative Mary Czaja:

The Board of Education of the Unified School District of Antigo has viewed with alarm the continuing de-funding of public education represented in the governor's recent biennial budget proposal. Over the past ten years, our district has cut \$9,000,000 and reduced over 63 staff positions to accommodate the continuing decline in revenues.

Prior to the governor's budget proposal, we were faced with a looming \$1,000,000 deficit for 2015-16. The elimination of the promised and previously-enacted \$150 per-pupil increase for the coming year pushes that deficit to over \$1.4 million. The proposed combination of increases are inaccessible to our district. Despite a sparsity distribution of 3 students per square mile in our 541-square-mile district, we are too large to qualify for sparsity aid. And since the proposed budget freezes revenues, the other aids, while giving some small element of relief to our taxpayers, will do nothing to restore lost revenue. Meanwhile, education funds continue to be siphoned off to private charter and voucher schools, which research has clearly shown, do no better than our public schools. We cannot but question, therefore, the motivation for, let alone the equity in, the proposed use of different accountability assessments, school-to-school and district-to-district.

We fear that the legislature is on the verge of propagating a perfect storm that could lead our district and the entire State of Wisconsin to the collapse of the only abundant, democratizing resource in society: public education. The confluence of declining revenues in support of public schools, combined with increasing numbers of high-cost children in poverty in our communities and a letter-grading system designed to suggest that our schools are barely passable, at best, is a toxic mix that will militate against improvements in the knowledge, skills and competencies our children acquire in their schooling.

Since the imposition of revenue caps in 1993, the Unified School District of Antigo, a conservative, low-spending district, has been at a competitive disadvantage, as have most rural school districts, when compared with more urban and suburban districts. Over time, this difference has been exacerbated by the current funding formula, putting our children at risk of not being competitive with their more urban counterparts. The current picture for USDA is even more grim. We have cut everything non-essential except co-curricular and athletic programs. Our community will not tolerate loss of those programs. We have nothing now left to cut that does not cut into the very heart of the educational programs we are required by law and moral rectitude to provide.

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We petition you, our duly-elected legislators, as follows: restore the \$150 per-pupil increase and allow district revenues to increase by an equal amount; freeze the funding of vouchers and the number of private schools eligible to participate; undertake development of a new funding formula for public education, including new funding source(s); and allow the Department of Public Instruction to discharge its constitutional duties with respect to school and district accountability.

Meanwhile, we invite you to visit our schools and interact with our children, our staff and our board. You are important to us; and we hope we are equally-important to you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael Boldig, President



Tara Guelzow, Member



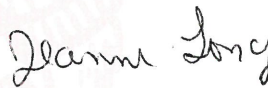
Scott Jensema, Vice-President



Gary Jaje, Member



Jessica Meade, Clerk



Jeanne Long, Member



Patrick McKenna, M.D., Treasurer

James Schultz, Member



Tim Fuller, Member



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March 9, 2015

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**Room 409 South**  
**State Capitol Building**  
**PO Box 8952**  
**Madison WI 53708**

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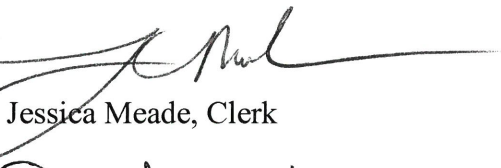
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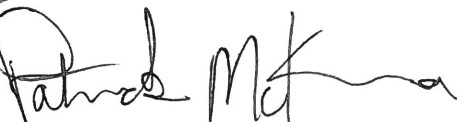
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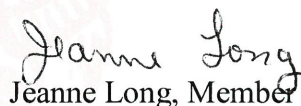
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